



BRANCH 27 NEWSLETTER AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2025

Hi Everyone,

I don't know about you but this last few weeks of wet have been diabolical, and I think everyone is fed up.

Especially hard for our guys who had to drive to our repeater site and establish our new link 8475 for DMR radio.

These folks are all Volunteers and it has not been pleasant up there just under the base of the Mountain.

As I write this the Sun is finally coming through.

We still haven't got our HF aerial up and running as Graeme ZL2TE has had to rewrite programs to suit the new digital set up here in our QTH and it has been a mammoth job to do, but we are almost there.

Our YL group is also trying to set up a new VHF weekly net for the NZ Yls as many have not got access to HF, but of course the National system repeater are desperately in need of repairs and at this stage Christchurch lower South Island area has no National system access.

Looks like Klondike repeater is finally up and running.

President's Report

Hi All

Things are ticking along with the DMR repeater now located on 8475 and is covering North Taranaki well.

There is a lot of work to be done to the tower when we get back to warmer weather, the Nuts on the tower base require urgent attention due to rusting, the lightning protection needs upgrading and both coaxes to the antenna's are scheduled for attention.

August sees the Lighthouse competition and we will be back out at the Cape Egmont Lighthouse again for that.

The junk sale is coming up in September so if you have any good gear that needs another home, the sale is a good opportunity to move it along and make a dollar or two out of it. Maybe this year we will not have as much scrap metal left over at the end of the day.

We are having a Ham Cram 15th & 16th November so if you know of any potential candidates then encourage them to register for the course, Hopefully may get some more younger members to boost our numbers, The Course is \$50.00 and is subsidised by some of the \$600.00 from the Toi Trust grant.

Many thanks to Ngaire for doing a great job on the newsletter, doing the newsletter along to the QTH change must have created quite a workload.

73, Terry ZL2TNB.

Lighthouse weekend Saturday 16th August starting at noon 48 hour event but if weather is bad we often pack up after 24 hours. Come out any time and join us (meet at Bayly Rd) by boat club.

JUNK SALE

The junk sale is on Saturday 20th September at Mangorei Memorial Hall 732 Junction Rd Burgess Park.

We can have access on Friday night to set up. If anyone has booked a table they can bring their gear in after helping. Otherwise the Hall will be open around 7.30am for sellers, with no sales before 10am. \$20 for a table prepaid, \$25 cash on the day. BBQ, sandwiches and hot drinks available.

TARANAKI AWARD

The Taranaki award will run from Wednesday 24th to Sunday 28th September
We will hold our weekly VHF Branch net at 7pm on that week

Amateur radio
Licensed and Legal



In 2 Days

If you want to join the fraternity of Amateur radio operators, come to this short course and learn Ham Radio. This weekend's training session will finish with the Amateur exam.

Date : 15th/16th November 2025
Cost: \$50

For more information, contact:
Trevor Jones
trevorjones@xtra.co.nz

Please pass this information to family & friends

Next Branch meeting will be Tuesday 19th August on ZOOM with subject to be confirmed.
Look out for Zoom address emailed to be admitted to meeting

NEW PLYMOUTH REPEATERS FROM AM TO DMR HISTORY

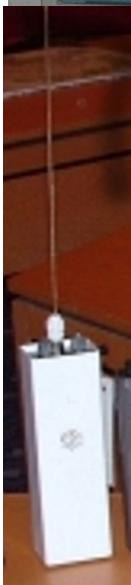
In the 1960's there was a leap forward in Amateur VHF communications with the availability of surplus VHF equipment. Prior to that it was considered the domain of the avid enthusiast with a requirement that you be slightly touched. With surplus radios like the Pye Reporter being affordable (just) cars started sporting Halo and whip antennas denoting the owner was on VHF. Car to car communications was difficult and particularly in places like Wellington the station you wanted to work always seemed to be on the other side of the hill. The demand was created and met with the emergence of repeaters.

The first AM Repeater was located at a radio shack on Marsland Hill and was originally a Post Office Emergency station.

Branch 27 as the New Plymouth Amateur Radio Club was then known, broke into the repeater market in the late 1960's with the purchase of a Pye AM base station which was converted for +600 KHz split operation on 147.200 MHz. The driving force behind this was John Hoskin who tragically lost his life in an aviation accident when the aircraft he was travelling in flew into the summit of Mt Egmont (as it was then)



There was a lot of work in converting and setting up the repeater it had a fault as the Filter capacitors kept blowing, these were taken out and replaced with higher voltage rating and the problem fixed. It was reliable and gave a healthy 25 watts of AM and the improved coverage increased the popularity of VHF communications around the region.

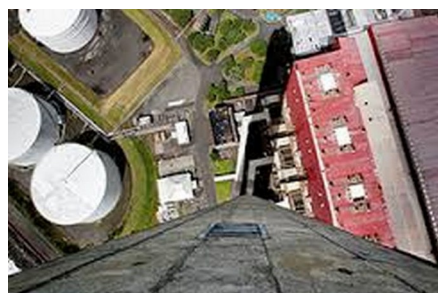


The 1970's saw the arrival of surplus FM mobile RT's and the advent of VHF transistors at an affordable



price saw designs like the Climie and Wellington Walkie arrive. Of course these radios would not work through an AM repeater and the reliable old Pye base station was deemed to have had its day. A kit set FM repeater was constructed and coincided with the construction of the Power Station Chimney which by various back-door means we got permission to install our repeater there. This was New Plymouth's best point of presence and 720 signal was spread far and wide. Back in those days we were able to readily access the Chimney because

we were part of the installation team who worked on the commercial radio equipment which was co-installed on the site. We were pretty familiar with the Power Station team, some of whom were hams also. The usual access was via a lift but whenever we wanted to work on the repeater it seemed to be broken down and we had to climb the 198 metres to the top via a spiral staircase often lugging a car battery or the spare repeater in a backpack. I suspect there were a few sniggers in the control room.



We did all the work from constructing the repeater to installing it to maintaining it. There was a little turret window that you could climb out of and reach the horizontal pole on which the antenna was mounted. We were supposed to get a rigger for this but I can recall a couple of times with my heart in my mouth bolting the antenna back. We had a lovely view all 600 feet down and it sure was nice to be back inside. Even climbing the open frame staircase was formidable.

The commercial services started arriving at this magnificent point of presence and so did intermodulation and pressure for our location which we were getting for free. The Power Station Manager recognised the service the repeater provided for emergency, sporting and cultural events and protected us fiercely but the decommissioning of the station in 2007 saw us lose to commercial interests and the access difficulties which were imposed by the OSH regulations over the presence of asbestos and the club decided to relocate at TEMO and so we were back at Marsland Hill.
Graeme ZL2TE

Around 207 because of asbestos problems etc. Branch 27 had to relocate back to Civil defence headquarters at Marsland Hill.

The old building it had been held in was no longer fit for purpose, and now sits at Tatum museum. Civil defence had built a new building which the Branch was able to be accommodated into.

Unfortunately because of the existing aerial the coverage on Marsland Hill was nowhere near as good as the chimney site and it was decided to relocate the repeater yet again to another site. Because Civil defence needed more space we also lost of radio room there.

720 Repeater Mangorei Rd

Enquiries were made about a site up Mangorei Rd and two of our members Graeme ZL2TE & Ngaire ZL2UJT made the trip up to discuss the possibility of setting up on Barry Carruthers property. He suggested there was a site further up the road that had a 50ft tower available. The owners had used this as a solar wind generator, but unfortunately because of the strong winds etc this proved to be unsuccessful.

We applied for a special grant from TSB and this was successful so we could go ahead with the project. Solar panels were purchased and Batteries to support these. Greg ZL2BZH was able to purchase a very reasonable repeater.



Removing the wind turbine from tower with crane



The floor goes down



The Hut goes onto the floor with the help of Colin ZL2AHY and Peter ZL2APJ (SK)



Some of the building team Graeme ZL2TE & Pat ZL2PJ



Ngairé ZL2UJT, Pat ZL2PJ
& Greg ZL2BZH Painting



The stacked dipoles are
on the way up.



Brett ZL2VN about to go up
tower with Terry ZL2TNB &
Jonno ZL2JBK helping



A view of our repeater sight showing Solar panels
and aerial mast

This month's Profile



Lee-ann ZL2TLO & Son George

ZL2TLO aka Terribly Lovely Operator or Lee-ann O'Donnell

Year 2000 there was a search at Tongaporutu, ZL2DBO was going up and I was on my way up to Taumarunui. She asked if I would like to come and help her set up the radios. It was all downhill from there.

ZL2VN Wayne Gaudin, who was in charge of AREC at the time, had been wanting me to get my ham licence for a while. Mum ZL2DBO, Dad ZL2BZN and ZL2VN all encouraged me. I am definitely not technically minded however helping people I do enjoy. I studied heaps and passed and thankfully didn't need to sit Morse code.

There were heaps of searches back then, sometimes 3 in a weekend.

I remember starting on a land search when the team had to be split, there was a marine search as well. A kite surfer being swept out to sea.

The Police SAR Sergeant said we'll do the marine search, we'll find him fast.

Every time we had a SARX (search and rescue exercise) you could guarantee there would be a live search before bed time after a long exercise.

But the 1 thing I loved was the Tarmac Rally. Wayne asked if I would like to be the radio operator in the tail-end Charlie car. Oh my Gosh we had no safety equipment, no helmets, no fire suits etc, we did have a first aid kit and fire extinguisher. JT was the driver and I did feel safe, JT's son and Wayne's son were both in the back sit. We drove through the course opening roads as we went. Calling car numbers, times etc through to The Plymouth penthouse where ZL2DBO and ZL2VN and others along with the radio club people were waiting for the results. So much was put into car rallies, maps, radio operators at the start, middle and end of stages, timings and so many of our past and present Radio Club members.

We once went flying into the Stratford petrol station with our sirens on the front, top and back of the 4x4 and this huge Road Open sign.

Around 2 stages later there was a call over the air waves for mostly everyone to hear. "Can the tail end Charlie car please call into the Stratford petrol station again on the way through and pay for your petrol. Laughs all round, at us.

JT knew when I was concentrating on calling in the start times and we were travelling on Thomason Road, he wanted some fun. We went flying up over this rise, and became airborne. I believe the words that came out of my mouth over all the airwaves were "OOOOHHHHH SHIT" Mum of course told me off and probably JT later. Such fun back then. I still love SAR, just not so much happening now.

Lee-ann ZL2LO

Take care everyone

Please if you would like to add something to the next newsletter or have any suggestions let me know, always happy to have any copy Ngaire ZL2UJT